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A DESCRIPTION OF THE LAKE AT KESWICK,

(And the Adjacent Country)

IN CUMBERLAND.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

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(And the Adjacent Counties)

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TO THE

GENTLEMEN OF CUMBERLAND

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THE PRODUCTION OF

THEIR CELEBRATED COUNTRYMAN,

D R. B R O W N,

IS

MOST RESPECTFULLY ADDRESSED,

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The Editor.

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE LAKE AT KESWICK.

IN my way to the North from HAGLEY, I paſſed through DOVEDALE; and, to ſay the truth, was diſappointed in it. When I came to BUXTON, I viſited another or two of their romantic ſcenes; but theſe are inferior to DOVEDALE. They are but poor miniatures of KESWICK; which exceeds them more in grandeur than I can give you to imagine; and more, if poſſible, in beauty than in grandeur.

INSTEAD of the narrow ſlip of valley which is ſeen at DOVEDALE, you have at KESWICK a vaſt amphitheatre, in circumference above twenty miles;---inſtead of a meagre rivulet, a noble living lake, ten miles round, of an oblong form, adorned with a variety of wooded iſlands. The rocks indeed of DOVEDALE are finely wild, pointed, and irregular; but the hills are both little and unanimated; and the margin of the brook is poorly edged with weeds, moraſs, and bruſhwood.---But at KESWICK, you will, on one ſide of the lake, ſee a rich and beautiful landſkip of cultivated fields, riſing to the eye, in fine inequalities, with noble groves of oak, happily diſperſed, and climbing the adjacent hills, ſhade above ſhade, in the moſt various and pictureſque forms. On the oppoſite ſhore, you will find rocks and cliffs of ſtupendous height, hanging broken over the lake in horrible grandeur, ſome of them a thouſand feet high, the woods climbing up their ſteep and ſhaggy ſides, where mortal foot never yet approached. On theſe dreadful heights the eagles build their neſts: a variety of water-falls are ſeen pouring

from their ſummits, and tumbling in vaſt ſheets from rock to rock in rude and terrible magnificence: while on all ſides of this immenſe amphitheatre the lofty mountains riſe round, piercing the clouds in ſhapes as ſpiry and fantaſtic as the very rocks of DOVEDALE.—To this I muſt add the frequent and bold projection of the cliffs into the lake, forming noble bays and promontories: in other parts they finely retire from it, and often open in abrupt chaſms or clefts; through which, at hand, you ſee rich and cultivated vales; and beyond theſe, at various diſtance, mountain riſing over mountain; among which, new proſpects preſent themſelves in miſt, till the eye is loſt in an agreeable perplexity:

Where active fancy travels beyond ſenſe,
And pictures things unſeen.——

WERE I to analyſe the two places into their conſtituent principles, I ſhould tell you, that the full perfection of KESWICK conſiſts of three circumſtances, BEAUTY, HORROR, and IMMENSITY united; the ſecond of which is alone found in DOVEDALE. Of beauty it hath little: nature

having left it almoſt a deſart: neither its ſmall extent, nor the diminutive and lifeleſs form of the hills, admit magnificence---But to give you a complete idea of theſe three perfections, as they are joined in KESWICK, would require the united powers of CLAUDE, SALVATOR, and POUSSIN. The firſt ſhould throw his delicate ſunſhine over the cultivated vales, the ſcattered cots, the groves, the lake, and wooded iſlands. The ſecond ſhould daſh out the horror of the rugged cliffs, the ſteeps, the hanging woods, and foaming water-falls; while the grand pencil of POUSSIN ſhould crown the whole, with the majeſty of the impending mountains.

So much for what I would call the *permanent* beauties of this aſtoniſhing ſcene. Were I not afraid of being tireſome, I could now dwell as long on its *varying* or *accidental* beauties. I would ſail round the lake, anchor in every bay, and land you on every promontory and iſland. I would point out the perpetual change of proſpect: the woods, rocks, cliffs, and mountains, by turns vaniſhing or riſing into view; now gaining

ing on the ſight, hanging over our heads in their full dimenſions, beautifully dreadful; and now, by a change of ſituation, aſſuming new romantic ſhapes, retiring and leſſening on the eye, and inſenſibly loſing themſelves in an azure miſt. I would remark the contraſt of light and ſhade, produced by the morning and evening ſun; the one gilding the weſtern and the other the eaſtern ſide of this immenſe amphitheatre; while the vaſt ſhadow projected by the mountains buries the oppoſite part in a deep and purple gloom, which the eye can hardly penetrate. The natural variety of colouring which the ſeveral objects produce is no leſs wonderful and pleaſing: the ruling tincts in the valley being thoſe of azure, green, and gold, yet ever various, ariſing from an intermixture of the lake, the woods, the graſs and corn-fields: theſe are finely contraſted by the grey rocks and cliffs; and the whole heightened by the yellow ſtreams of light, the purple hues, and miſty azure of the mountains. Sometimes a ſerene air and clear ſky diſcloſe the tops of the higheſt hills: at others, you ſee the clouds involving their ſummits,

reſting

reſting on their ſides, or deſcending to their baſe, and rolling among the vallies, as in a vaſt furnace.---When the winds are high, they roar among the cliffs and caverns like peals of thunder; then too the clouds are ſeen in vaſt bodies ſweeping along the hills in gloomy greatneſs, while the lake joins the tumult and toſſes like a ſea: but in calm weather the whole ſcene becomes new: the lake is a perfect mirror; and the landſkip in all its beauty, iſlands, fields, woods, rocks, and mountains are ſeen inverted and floating on its ſurface.---I will now carry you to the top of a cliff, where, if you dare approach the ridge, a new ſcene of aſtoniſhment preſents itſelf, where the valley, lake, and iſlands, ſeem lying at your feet; where this expanſe of water appears diminiſhed to a little pool, amidſt the vaſt immeaſurable objects that ſurround it; for here the ſummits of more diſtant hills appear beyond thoſe you had already ſeen; and riſing behind each other in ſucceſſive ranges and azure groups of craggy and broken ſteeps, form an immenſe and awful picture, which can only be expreſſed by the image of a tempeſtuous ſea of mountains.

---Let me now conduct you down again, to the valley, and conclude with one circumſtance more; which is, that a walk by ſtill moon-light (at which time the diſtant water-falls are heard in all their variety of ſound) among theſe enchanting dales, opens a ſcene of ſuch delicate beauty, repoſe, and ſolemnity, as exceeds all deſcription!

THE END.

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